

Services, the Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Mental Health Association of Nebraska, we have been working with these individuals for some time on this issue. The basic concept is this right now, if you are mentally ill and you have an attack or something in terms of your illness and you need protection, you are a threat to yourself or to others, there is what is termed as "protective custody" authorized in the statutes so that the police can be called and you can be picked up and placed somewhere so that you don't hurt yourself or you don't hurt somebody else. You haven't committed a crime. You haven't done anything that you could be charged a crime with but, frankly, they are worried about you. They are worried about the situation. They want to get the problem taken care of. Now the worse thing you can do under those circumstances is take that mentally ill person and place them in a jail, in a jail that is a cell with the bars and nobody there who knows much about mental illness, and you can take that bad situation and make it worse. You can take that attack they are having in terms of the mental illness and make the situation far worse than it is even to begin with, and we are saying that mental illness is similar to physical illness, and they are. Physical illness, if you were physically ill, you would go to a hospital to get that care. Mental illness, you should similarly go to a hospital or someplace with the medical ability to treat the mental illness that you are suffering from. Illness is illness, whether it is physical or mental, and a jail is no place to take somebody who is physically ill and it is no place to take somebody who is mentally ill. So the concept is agreed to by most everybody. The counties, the professionals, the law enforcement people, I think all agree that we shouldn't be placing mentally ill people, who haven't committed a crime, into jail, but the problem is the services and the facilities aren't across the state, and so we need to get moving on that issue, and the goal of the bill is to place forward in 1992 the elimination of the ability to place these people in jail. That forces the issue so that the counties, in particular, and the state working with them can come forward with the program that we need to take care of this need. We don't make it implemented immediately, although there are those that would like to see that happen. The injustice of placing the mentally ill in jail has some people desiring immediate change in the law, but I feel you can't make that immediate change because of the chaos that would result across the state, in the rural areas in particular. They don't have the ability to meet the need. So if you have the delayed date, you have the ability to work with the department